CHALLENGE
A PAMPHLET BY PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Control of Iraqi Oil: Key for U.S. Bosses' Plan to Rule World

ORGANIZE TO SMASH CAUSE OF WAR: CAPITALISM

INTRODUCTION

U.S. rulers have assembled the greatest, most destructive arsenal in world history. Since the middle of the Twentieth Century, from Hiroshima to Korea to Vietnam to Latin America, Africa and Kosovo, their bullets, bombs — including nuclear devices — and economic terrorism have far eclipsed Hitler in the murder of workers and children.

Now they are ready to unleash military havoc against the working class of Iraq in a gamble to dominate the world for the foreseeable future. This is the nature of capitalism—the profit system.

The butchery of imperialist war reveals the nature of capitalism to masses of workers, students and soldiers. During the Vietnam war, when the U.S. military slaughtered over three million people, rebellions were a daily occurrence - from Paris to Detroit to Mexico City to the U.S. GIs who "fragged" (killed) their own officers in Vietnam. Imperialist war opens the door to win many to PLP's communist politics of turning the war into a mass revolutionary struggle to sweep away the warmakers - from the battlefronts to the factories, from schools to neighborhoods, from Washington to Baghdad.

The coming war isn't about "weapons of mass destruction (WMD)." Saddam has fewer WMD's now than he did when the 1991 Gulf War began. The U.S. supplied him with much of the chemical and biological weapons he does possess, for use during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, when U.S. policymakers considered Iran their greatest threat in the Persian Gulf.

The "weapons inspections" are a hypocritical ploy designed to give Bush an excuse to launch a war that U.S. bosses consider a strategic necessity. At the heart of the matter lies the vast treasure of Iraqi oil - proven reserves of 112 billion barrels, second largest in the world after Saudi Arabia. In addition, "as many as 220 billion barrels of resources are deemed probable." ("Guiding Principles for U.S. Post-Conflict Policy in Iraq," Council on Foreign Relations/Baker Institute for Public Policy, p. 18)

For modern capitalism, oil is not just another commodity. It is the lifeline to economic and political power, fueling the factories, the transportation systems and the engines of war. It remains crucial to the production of everything from pharmaceuticals to computer chips. Whoever controls the cheapest, most abundant supplies, can wield extraordinary power over its rivals.

For the U.S. ruling class, world domination is a matter of necessity, flowing from the character of the profit system. As Marx and Engels, the founders of scientific communism, understood 150 years ago, the capitalists require maximum profit.

Imperialism generates bloody capitalist rivalries while it impoverishes and slaughters the workers of the world.As Lenin wrote 100 years ago, this means, an insatiable drive to invest abroad, to find larger pools of cheap labor, new markets and access to raw materials. U.S. bosses' competitors also clamor for maximum profits. This inter-imperialist rivalry inevitably leads to war. War in Iraq will drag us further into the bloodiest stage of imperialism in world history.

DON'T FIGHT FOR THE BOSSES' OIL PROFITS,FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER- "COMMUNISM!" P.L.P.
NO LUCHES POR LAS GANANCIAS PETROLERAS DE LOS PATRONES, LUCHA POR EL PODER DE LOS TRABAJADORES "EL COMUNISMO!" P.L.P.

PLP banner at Jan. 11 Los Angeles anti-war rally. While no peace movement has ever stopped imperialist war, revolutions have smashed imperialist warmakers. During World War 1, the Bolsheviks won Russian soldiers to join workers and make revolution in 1917.

The international working class has a long, hard fight ahead. Over the next decade or so, U.S. bosses are likely to occupy the entire Persian Gulf. Their Chinese, European and Russian rivals will not sit still forever and hand them a free pass, as they are forced to do today. Over the long haul, another world war is in the cards, most likely between an isolated U.S. and a coalition of its foes.

This is merely the harsh truth of imperialism and the laws that govern it. But we don't have to accept this monstrous future. Communist revolution offers the one alternative to imperialist war. Despite the reversals of the first communist revolutions, history shows that communist parties can lead masses of workers and soldiers in opposing armies to turn imperialist war into its opposite. World War I produced the Russian Revolution. The Chinese Revolution was born out of World War II. By building a mass communist movement, across all borders, out of each imperialist adventure, our revolutionary forces can grow stronger and ultimately make the next world war their last! We offer the following guide to action and an argument for joining and strengthening the Progressive Labor Party.

U.S. OWES ITS SUPREMACY TO DEATH OF OLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT...

The U.S. ruling class won the Cold War hands-down. The Soviet and Chinese revolutions both collapsed from the burden of fatal capitalist flaws in their political line (*for an in-depth analysis of this process, see PLP's documents* **Road to Revolution III** *and* **Road to Revolution IV**). Even after the Soviet Union had abandoned communism and chosen the capitalist road by the 1960s, it nonetheless remained a formidable imperialist rival to the U.S. In 1989, however, this challenge disappeared, when for the first time in history, the rulers of one great power capitulated to their main competitors without firing a single shot. This is essentially what happened when former Soviet Premier Gorbachev dismantled first the Berlin Wall and then the Soviet empire itself.

Things looked rosy for U.S. imperialism. The Soviets had deflated of their own accord, and the new bosses of China were decades away from posing a serious threat. Gorbachev signaled the dawn of this new period by giving George Bush Sr. the green light for "Desert Storm" I against Iraq in 1991, a war that would have been inconceivable at the height of Soviet power. The U.S. slaughtered hundreds of thousands and had a cakewalk in Iraq but yet didn't finish the job. For a number of reasons, Bush Sr. couldn't march on Baghdad and had to leave Saddam Hussein in power.

...BUT SUPREMACY IS RELATIVE AND DOESN'T MEAN OMNIPOTENCE

Hindsight here exposes the paradox of "super-power" imperialism. For over a decade, no rival force has been able to challenge U.S. military, economic, or political might. Yet during that same time, the most lethal armada in history has not managed to unseat a petty tyrant, Hussein, the U.S. government calls the worst member of an "axis of evil." This alone should teach us that even the most powerful imperialist in the world must operate within limitations.

These limitations are further reflected by George W. Bush's end-of-year waffling over Venezuela and North Korea. If Washington's attention hadn't been focused on

its Iraq adventure, Bush might have acted quickly and ruthlessly to keep Venezuelan oil flowing and dump the pro-European Chavez. But a U.S.-engineered anti-Chavez coup could provoke the European rulers into toughening their stance against Bush's plans in Iraq.

As for North Korea, its rulers appear to have gambled that despite Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's boast about "two-front wars," Iraq and Afghanistan are all the U.S. can handle at the moment. The North Korean game of "chicken" brinksmanship may well result in the extraction of political and economic concessions from the Bush gang. And so, as is always the case, the exercise of "super-power" generates unintended consequences that aren't fully manageable.

On the other hand, we mustn't commit the folly of underestimating U.S. imperialism. The collapse of the old communist movement and of the former Soviet Union has given the U.S. unprecedented maneuverability and a new lease on life at the top. In 1999, for example, Clinton bombed the former Yugoslavia into the Stone Age, killing untold numbers of civilians and poisoning the rivers and atmosphere, simply because Yugoslav president Milosevic had committed the unpardonable crime

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of trying to get into the oil pipeline business independently of U.S. energy giants. The Clinton/NATO atrocities became possible because the U.S. didn't have to face the threat of Soviet retaliation. This aerial genocide against a country with deep ties to Russia would have been unthinkable under Stalin or even under Khrushchev.

LIBERAL RULERS SCHEME TO STAY ON TOP

Now the bankers at Citicorp and J.P. Morgan Chase and their pals in the boardrooms of Exxon Mobil, Chevron Texaco, and BP Amoco want to finish the job Bush Sr. started in Iraq in 1991. They seem to have sufficiently disciplined Bush Jr. so that his tactics will suit their pleasure. But although none of their rivals can prevent them from starting this war, the U.S. imperialists are not acting exclusively from strength. Doubt plagues them about the stability of their current world domination, and they are gambling heavily to maintain it.

A decade ago, while the rulers' mass media were trumpeting nonsense about the "end of history" and the "new world order," the liberal think tanks in Washington and New York knew better. Regardless of the party that occupies the U.S. presidency, crucial decisions about economic and foreign policy are made in the offices and published in the journals of organizations like the Council on Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institute, the Carnegie Endowment for World "Peace," the Trilateral Commission, and the Pacific Council on International policy. With interlocking directorates and members representing the biggest banks, corporations, foundations, political factions, and universities, these are the true strategic mouthpieces of the ruling class and its most powerful wing, the Eastern Establishment.

Barely after the end of Desert Storm I, Brookings and the Carnegie Foundation published a study entitled "Changing Our Ways". It warned that in the period ahead, U.S. rulers must prevent the rise of a "rival super-power" in Europe and Asia, that they must prepare to assert absolute control over Persian Gulf oil, and that they must find ways to persuade a reluctant U.S. working class to fight the wars that will be needed to achieve these goals. The specter of "Vietnam Syndrome," the unwillingness of working class soldiers and sailors to die for U.S. imperialism, haunted the rulers then and haunts them still today.

In the waning years of the Clinton presidency, a "bi-partisan" commission headed by former Senators Gary Hart and Warren Rudman released a report on "National Security in the 21st Century." It echoed the line of "Changing Our Ways", adding a dire warning about U.S. vulnerability to terrorist attack on the home front. It even cautioned that only a "domestic Pearl Harbor" might be capable of "galvanizing" U.S. public opinion to accept the "sacrifice in blood and treasure" necessary to militarize society and to mobilize for an endless series of foreign wars. This was two years before the incidents of 9/11/01.

If 9/11 hadn't happened, U.S. rulers might have concocted something like it. In any event, the terrorist attacks gave them a tailor-made excuse to launch their "war on terror" in Afghanistan, to prepare the next Persian Gulf oil war, and to set the stage for a fascist police state on the home front.

IS THE RULERS' GLASS HALF-FULL OR HALF-EMPTY?

So far the bosses have achieved at best mixed results. They unseated the Taliban in Afghanistan but haven't managed to subdue the country outside the capital. The Bush White House has earned poor grades from the liberal Eastern Establishment for the ineptitude of its Homeland Security program. *The New York Times* regularly takes Bush to task for squandering his post-9/11 window of opportunity to build the police state.

The greatest thorn of all in the rulers' side at the moment is the persistent lukewarm popular support for the next war in Iraq. Most people aren't buying Bush's B.S. about Saddam's "weapons of mass destruction." Lesley Gelb, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, bemoans "enormous opposition" around the U.S. to the White House line that Saddam Hussein represents a major security threat to the U.S. and must be "dealt with now rather than later" (Interview with Bernard Gwertz-

continued on next page

Peace Movement Can't Do It; To Fight War One Must Fight Its Cause: Capitalism

The approach of war has spawned a broad coalition of "peace" organizations in the U.S., complete with petitions, newspaper ads, and mass rallies. Hundreds of thousands turned out in Washington in October and will again in January. Many people sincerely oppose the Pentagon's butchery. It's good to protest war, but unfortunately that by itself won't end imperialist war, especially since the leadership of the anti-war movement believes in the old "lesser evil" theory: that some Liberal Democrats and Republicans and a section of the ruling class, actually wants peace. Peace and capitalism don't mix: the drive for maximum profits is the main source of all modern wars. This impels the leaders of each group to speak for a particular capitalist faction that has its own interest in shedding workers' blood.

A group called ANSWER, the chief organizer of the rally on Jan. 18 in Washington, answers to the more powerful U.S. rulers who seek broader popular support for their warmaking through the Democratic Party. ANSWER blames the Bush administration alone for the Iraq war. ANSWER ignores the fact that the Gore-Lieberman 2000 platform called explicitly for "armed force" to effect "regime change" in Baghdad.

ANSWER headlines Establishment loyalists Ramsey Clark and Jesse Jackson among its supporters. As attorney general under President Lyndon Johnson, Clark had no qualms about jailing opponents of U.S. genocide in Vietnam. When the main U.S. rulers decided to cut their losses and get out of Vietnam, Clark suddenly became a peacenik, luring many protesters to the dead-end electoral system. Jackson got the Rockefeller brothers' Public Service Award in 1978 and, by misdirecting public opinion, has served his masters well ever since. In 1996, Jackson attacked racist bosses at Texaco, who, by the way, were planning to ease out of the Mideast oil racket. The embarrassed execs were soon toeing the Rockefeller-led main wing's "Baghdad or Bust" line.

Peace Action (formerly SANE/Freeze), another major "anti-war" force, actually promotes U.S. military superiority. Peace Action belongs to the 17-member Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers. Its program of international nuclear disarmament benefits U.S. rulers, who want to monopolize nuclear weapons while wielding the deadliest conventional forces in history. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund helps bankroll Peace Action.

Some "anti-war" voices preach the slow and steady, and thus more deadly, build-up to war favored by the faction of rulers that takes the longer range outlook. In October, a liberal on-line journal named TomPaine.com published a cartoon in the New York Times with the caption "Osama bin Laden Wants You to Invade Iraq" beneath the terrorist's image. The accompanying text said that a hasty invasion would play into Al Qaeda's hands by sparking anti-U.S. rebellions throughout the Arab and Muslim world. TomPaine.com gets its money from the Florence Foundation, headed by liberal broadcaster Bill Moyers. Moyers has served as a director of the Council on Foreign Relations and was a trustee of the Rockefeller foundation for 12 years.

Hollywood activists like Susan Sarandon and Martin Sheen fall into the same camp. While claiming opposition to war, they cite sources like mass murderers General Anthony Zinni and Admiral Eugene Carroll in building what ultimately would be an even more lethal pro-U.S. coalition working through the U.N.

Perhaps the most transparently pro-war "anti-war" statement is Representative Charles Rangel's call for a renewed military draft. Decrying Bush's war plans, Rangel demands a "military...of sufficient strength and size to meet present and future commitments" as well as "an all-out mobilization of Americans for the war effort, including mandatory national service (New York Times, 12/31/02).

One minor strand of the anti-war movement, Not in Our Name, evokes the old communist movement's disastrous line on nationalism supporting Iraq's right to "self-determination." Nationalism favors local capitalist rulers over international ones and gave rise to terrorist movements worldwide. Is Hussein or bin Laden any better than Bush or Clinton?

Many Catholic bishops oppose the war because they follow the Vatican which sides with the European imperialist rivals of U.S.rulers. French bosses in particular, with big oil deals pending with Iraq, don't want a U.S. puppet regime in Iraq. Detroit's Bishop Thomas Gumbleton is headed to the Washington rally. He founded Pax Christi USA, the U.S. franchise of a peace group based in France. But the liberal media have effectively discredited Catholic leaders disloyal to the U.S. Establishment by exposing the sex abuse scandals. ✪

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:

✪ PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of capitalism, like wages and divisions

✪ Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

✪ Communism means working collectively to build a society based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.

✪ Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

✪ Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.

✪ Communism means abolishing nations which leads to nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✪ Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers, eventually everyone must become communist organizers.

JOIN US!

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man, cfr.org, December 19).

But Gelb adds that this lack of popular support "won't play a big role in whether or not to go to war." In other words, the bosses consider the stakes high enough that they are preparing to take a significant gamble and betting, as Gelb says, that the war can be "won quickly and decisively."

The stakes are high indeed. Despite the seeming international omnipotence of McDonald's, Coke, and MTV, the bosses worry about losing their hammerlock on international rivals. This is particularly true now that European, Russian, and Chinese competitors are planning to build, buy, or steal their own share of Persian Gulf oil. U.S. rulers see the handwriting on a not so distant wall and are trying to forestall the inevitable. The first Hart-Rudman report suggested that U.S. world domination could last at most another 25 years. A more recent book from the Council on Foreign Relations cuts that estimate down to a decade. This fear and the knowledge that those on top have nowhere to go but down have intensified the U.S. preoccupation with control of oil and thus the current drive to hold Iraq.

If the U.S. does nothing, its Persian Gulf oil hammerlock will surely loosen. France, Russia, and China all have lucrative contracts to develop Iraqi oil as soon as the sanctions regime ends. Even Saudi Arabia, a longtime U.S. ally, is no longer a reliable puppet. Osama bin Laden is a Saudi, as were most of the 9/11 hijackers. Bin Laden's main goal is to wrest control of Saudi oil from the current government in Riyadh and from Exxon Mobil et al. With the end of the Cold War, U.S. imperialism can no longer pose as Europe's great protector from the Soviet communist bogeyman. The only threat left in the grab-bag is control of Persian Gulf oil.

DOGFIGHT OVER TACTICS AMONG MURDERERS

Despite efforts to achieve unity within its own ranks, the U.S. ruling class doesn't yet speak with one voice about the tactics needed to maintain its world dominance. Some of the rulers, represented in the Bush White House by Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, suggest that the best approach is to go it alone, using overwhelming U.S. military supremacy to seize Iraq. That tactic, they reason, would give the U.S. physical control of the country and a military presence in the region to discipline Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, and anyone else in the Middle East who doesn't toe Washington's line. This brain trust believes that such an action, aided by the U.S.'s fascist Israeli chums, will succeed rapidly and without major U.S. casualties.

Other elements of the ruling class consider this scenario far too rosy. They worry about the potential for mass anti-U.S./Israel uprisings throughout the Arab and Muslim world and about European and Russian potential for mischief if the U.S. acts alone. Led by Colin Powell, who earned his genocide stripes in Vietnam and Desert Storm I, this crew wants to arm-twist the European bosses into a junior partnership, which would enlist tacit support for war in exchange for a limited cut of Iraqi oil profits. The Powellites would also cut the Russians in on some of the oil loot.

The Powell view takes into account the very long-range threat of China as the main strategic rival to U.S. world hegemony. China's rising capitalists will need U.S. investment and technology for years to come. However, they have every capitalist's need for maximum profit, as well as an expanding industrial base, a quickly growing dependency on Persian Gulf oil, the world's largest population, and a strategic plan to project Chinese naval power into the Persian Gulf.

ILLUSIONS ABOUT LIBERALS AND PEACE: MAIN DANGER TO WORKING CLASS

The liberals in the ruling class, who want to dangle the carrot of junior partnerships before the Europeans, Russians, and Chinese, also see the importance of creating an official "loyal" opposition to the Rumsfeld/Wolfowitz unilateralist "first strike" position. Thus, while the liberal wing advocates war from one side of its mouth, it pushes pacifism from the other.

In Los Angeles and New York, major institutions like the Episcopal Church host anti-war meetings. Prominent media figures associated with the "left wing" of the Democratic Party sponsor ads attacking Saddam Hussein while calling on Bush not to attack the Iraqi people. *The New York Times* worries editorially that Bush hasn't done enough to explain why war is necessary, to build domestic support for attacking Iraq, and to win workers to die—even as it suggests a more cautious approach than Rumsfeld's. The CFR's Gelb echoes the *Times*, demanding that Bush produce a "smoking gun…something that everyone would recognize as concrete proof" that Saddam Hussein is Public Enemy Number One. Gelb admits his real goal: "to convince a lot of these Americans who want to be convinced" about the need for war with Iraq (op. cit.).

Both the Rumsfeld clique and the liberals represent the main wing of the U.S. ruling class. They share U.S. imperialism's goals of world domination and control over Persian Gulf Oil. They agree that the U.S. must go to war in Iraq and that the war will eventually spread throughout the Middle East and beyond. They believe that to keep the working class and society as a whole in line, an iron-fisted police state under the guise of "homeland security" will be necessary as the true economic and human costs of imperialist war become clearer.

This debate within the ruling class is therefore purely tactical. Workers and their allies have everything to lose by taking sides in it. The liberals, who pose as a "lesser evil," represent the main danger to our class. Our job as this struggle unfolds is not to march over a cliff under the leadership of our enemies but rather to grow as a revolutionary political force independent of all bosses. PLP has always worked to expose the true nature of liberal politicians and will continue to do so. The main enemy isn't necessarily the one who comes straight at us with a sign reading "Bad Guy" but rather the wolf in sheep's clothing.

BEWARE THE WARMAKERS POSING AS DOVES

This is particularly true now that the liberal Eastern Establishment appears to be gaining the upper hand. Bush's latest White House shakeup places Treasury, the National Economic Council, and the Securities and Exchange Commission firmly in control of the liberal wing, under the leadership of proven Rockefeller loyalists John Snow, Stephen Friedman, and William Donaldson. The public disgracing of Trent Lott, whose racist views have long been common knowledge, is particularly significant because of its timing. Lott doesn't belong to the the Republican Party's Rockefeller clique, who are the biggest racist killers in history. However, on the verge of their next war, Rockefeller & Co. need more than ever to disguise themselves as anti-racists. They require loyalty and self-sacrifice from hundreds of thousands of black and latin soldiers now in their military, as well as from millions more who will be drafted into it as the situation sharpens over the years ahead.

The liberal faction of the Bush White House seems to have gained the ascendency in the conduct of Iraq war policy as well as of economic policy. Last September, Bush's carefully orchestrated speech at the U.N. heralded this victory and showed Bush's new willingness to precede the mass slaughter with a charade of legality. The reintroduction of U.N. weapons inspectors into Iraq reflects the Powell line. Behind the scenes, the U.S. government appears to be both threatening and cajoling the rulers of other nations into accepting the inevitable.

As the usually accurate Stratfor.com report points out:

"The United States has, with some real skill, gone a long way in defusing opposition to an attack. There is no enthusiasm for it and most nations will not participate, but there is now a sense that war no longer can be resisted. The standard position that is emerging, from France to Syria, is that (1) war is coming, (2) other countries don't want to be deeply involved, yet (3) they don't want

to be left out of the spoils. That's about as good as it's going to get for the United States this time around." ("War Timing," Dec. 24).

Powell has already opined that Iraq is in "material breach" of the U.S.-mandated U.N. weapons inspection rules. This is double-talk for the "smoking gun" Gelb and other liberals want as a fig-leaf. In all likelihood, barring a surprise, in late January, the "U.N. Security Council will declare Iraq in breach of the resolution and will develop some vague language under which the United States can launch an attack without an actual U.N. endorsement. That will do for the United States" (Stratfor, ibid).

Most estimates in the rulers' press predict that the air war the U.S. and Britain have been waging for several years over Iraq will intensify in early February, and that ground action will begin a month later. The PLP isn't in the business of prophecy. We don't have access to the rulers' secrets. Obviously, a lot of behind the scenes wheeling and dealing is going on, and we don't know very much about it.

But imperialism produces war, and communists must never commit the deadly mistake of lulling the working class with the false hope of peace. Whether or not the timetable of ground war by March is accurate, U.S. rulers must establish their control over Iraqi oil by armed force. All indications point to an invasion sooner than later. The U.S. ruling class wants it soon and is betting on a favorable military outcome.

RULERS' "HUMANITARIANISM:" THOUSANDS OF WORKERS MURDERED TODAY, MILLIONS MORE TOMORROW

High on the bosses' wish list is a rapid victory with very few U.S. casualties and a relatively low number of Iraqi civilian deaths—perhaps in the tens of thousands instead of the hundreds of thousands. This is the bosses' idea of humanitarianism. In the eight years of the liberal Clinton presidency, a million Iraqis, mostly children, died because of U.S.-enforced sanctions.

The Rockefeller-dominated Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)) has already co-published *Guiding Principles for U.S. Post-Conflict Policy in Iraq*. This scheme supposes "military operations…of relatively short duration," recognizes the need for a U.S. "peacekeeping" (i.e. occupying) force, proposes a "U.S. coordinator for Iraq," and emphasizes the need to rule Iraq through pro-U.S. Iraqi stooges rather than directly. At the core of these "principles" is the estimate that the Iraqi oil treasure should be managed by Iraq's existing "professional corps of oil industry technocrats and technicians," rather than by supervisors from Exxon Mobil et al. This notion of ruling through local proxies has underpinned every theory of empire from the Romans to the British. The Nazis also gave it a whirl.

But even the CFR admits that in the best case, putting a pro-U.S. Iraqi oil industry back on its feet will involve tremendous financial investment and require the solution of numerous, severe infrastructure problems. This is the

U.S.-FRENCH RIVALRY HEATS UP IN AFRICA…AGAIN

French bosses, taking advantage of Washington's preoccupation with Iraq, are seeking to expand their influence in Africa. Last month, the landing of a French warship in the Ivory Coast brought French troop strength there to over 2500. The French are there to squash a rebellion and thereby tighten control over their former colony. A chief French worry is that rebels are filtering in from Liberia, which has long-standing ties to the U.S. "Many of the new rebels speak English and not French, which is the official Ivorian language" (allAfrica.com, 12/9/02). The French action resumes a power struggle by proxy between Paris and Washington that came to a head during the massacres in Rwanda in 1994. At that time Paul Kagame, a Rwandan army officer, left a U.S. Army training school in Kansas to seize control of the country from French-leaning forces.✪

rosiest scenario in the bag of U.S. pipe-dreams.

POTENTIAL TROUBLE IN BOSSES' OILY PARADISE

Three significant contingencies might interfere with it. One is the morale and battle readiness of the Iraqi military. In 1991, contrary to the fears of Bush Sr.'s top advisors, it didn't put up a fight. Bush Jr.'s minions are assuming that the same situation will prevail in 2003. But the morale of an opposing army isn't always easy to judge before the shooting starts. Some of Saddam Hussein's loyalists may put up a show, and the result could involve U.S. troops in a prolonged and bloody series of urban guerrilla skirmishes in and around Baghdad and other cities. U.S. rulers have reason to doubt the morale of their own military in this case.

The second contingency is the attitude of masses of Arab and Muslim workers in other countries. The bin Laden-al Qaeda strategy involves provoking the U.S. into a series of increasingly savage military adventures in countries where al Qaeda has a base. The bet is that mass rebellion will eventually break out, and that al Qaeda can lead it to expel the U.S. and seize the oil fields, as the Iranian ayatollahs did in 1979, when they took advantage of nationalist-religious uprisings to kick out the U.S.-backed Shah. So far the bin Laden strategy has yet to be proved a failure.

The third contingency is the potentially explosive internal conditions that may accompany a U.S. occupation of Iraq, even if the war doesn't provoke uncontrollable mass rebellions elsewhere. Bush and Rumsfeld boast that the Iraqi masses and the Arab bosses and populations outside Iraq will welcome the U.S. military as liberators and saviors. Facts suggest otherwise. None of the ruling classes of other major Persian Gulf nation wants the U.S. to monopolize Iraq's oil treasure. Most of these bosses have proxy forces inside Iraq and could try to strengthen them. All the existing anti-Saddam factions—Kurd, Shiite and Sunni—have their own plans for post-Saddam power grabs. The U.S., on the other hand, wants to maintain Iraq's present territorial unity and must therefore co-opt or smash these efforts to carve out turf. Al Qaeda could take advantage of Iraq's spongy borders to launch terror attacks against the U.S. military and U.S. oil interests.

One can safely predict that the U.S.'s new war in Iraq will lead to a series of unintended and hard to manage consequences.

But even if the U.S. enjoys a relatively quick and easy campaign in Iraq, ousts Saddam Hussein, places its team of Iraqi lackeys in charge of the oil fields, and somehow handles all the challenges mentioned above, more war is still in the cards. Conditions are slowly maturing for sharper conflict between the U.S. and all other imperialists, who will not bend forever to its will.

Multi-Racial Unity Against Round Up of Immigrants

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 6 - The day after the arrest of up to 700 Middle Eastern immigrants here several thousand people held an angry protest. Last Saturday, hundreds demonstrated at INS headquarters. Reflecting its multi-national, international character, the group chanted, "Arab, Asian, black, Latin, white - against deportations we must unite." A lawyer said he couldn't tell his clients to register, knowing it was a "set-up." Others called for "fair registrations" to "protect immigrants," but this will only insure passivity in the face of fascism. Another speaker denounced the coming war in Iraq. A PLP leaflet was well received.

The INS threatens to register all immigrants, including those from Latin America and Asia, who form a much larger group than the 400,000 Iranians. Immigrant workers are a key part of the California economy. The rulers will use selective deportations to intimidate these historically militant workers while keeping the rest to super-exploit.

They want citizens to remain passive as Middle Eastern immigrants are harassed and deported, sending a message to all workers: don't fight back or strike against imperialist war, racist cutbacks or fascism.✪

ALL LONG-RANGE SCENARIOS LEAD TO MORE INTER-IMPERIALIST WAR

The major ones include:

Increased competition with the European Union. "Europe's ultimate goal is to become a superpower; an objective that is as natural as the United States' drive to prevent the emergence of other superpowers" (Stratfor, "War in Iraq: What's at Stake for Europe?" Dec. 4). This process could take decades, but the interests of European bosses are clear. Short-term setbacks due to U.S. supremacy won't alter the basic laws of capitalism. A U.S. victory in Iraq could hurt the euro, which is the only currency that could rival the dollar as the main international currency. U.S. control of the oil industry in Iraq and other Middle Eastern States would thwart European bosses' drive toward superpower status. European energy majors like France's TotalFinaElf may be temporarily forced to accept the profit crumbs Exxon Mobil deigns to grant them from the Iraqi oil feast, but neither they nor the European ruling classes as a whole can indefinitely accept junior partner status. The European Union's plan to build a military force independent of the U.S. can only accelerate in the wake of the next Persian Gulf war. Europe is a strategic rival.

The risk of Russia's resurgence as a powerful U.S. enemy. The collapse of the Soviet Union turned Russia into a third-rate capitalist power. Much of this decline was engineered by U.S. policymakers and economists. But Russian bosses' long-range interest dictates that they attempt to regain top-dog status. Oil is key to this process. Russia has a lot of it in the ground, but it is difficult and costly to get. Therefore Russian oil barons need access to the Persian Gulf and also a price floor for their own oil around $20/bbl. A U.S. victory in Iraq might lead to a temporary spike in the cost of world petroleum. But this would make already costly Russian oil undesirable on the world market. Over time, U.S. control of Iraqi oil could drastically reduce the world price, driving it far below a level Russian oil barons can bear. U.S. majors could then snatch the Russian oil companies in fire-sale conditions, hoping to deliver a knockout blow to this competition. But the competition doesn't want to be knocked out. Despite its present troubles, Russia has an industrial base, a nuclear arsenal, and a long history of resistance to foreign invaders. As Germany proved in the 1930s, a humiliated "superpower" can quickly rebound if its rulers summon the necessary political will. Under certain conditions, the working class can be misled to fight for national-fascist goals. A U.S. victory in Iraq, coupled with internal developments in Russia, would increase this possibility over the next decade or two.

Even if the U.S. imperialists achieve overwhelming victory in Iraq, the primary consequence will be a strategic sharpening of every contradiction between them and the rest of the world's bosses.

The rise of China as the U.S. imperialism's main rival. As we pointed out above, U.S. rulers want to lock up Persian Gulf oil before the Chinese navy can threaten Exxon Mobil's supremacy. If Washington gains control over Iraqi oil and the U.S. military dominates the entire region, Chinese imperial ambitions will suffer a setback. But this scenario will obliterate neither Chinese rulers' need to expand nor their thirst for Persian Gulf oil. A U.S. triumph in Iraq could paradoxically provide a windfall to the Chinese economy. Chinese capitalism is enjoying an investment boom, which could continue if the U.S. economy becomes increasingly focused on war. China's bosses still need U.S. investments and technology, which they can use to pursue their economic growth. They are also attracting significant investment from U.S. rivals. At the same time, they plan to assert themselves as a regional power. South Korean and other Pacific companies already invest more in China than they do in the United States (Stratfor, December 13). While the United States extends its military might throughout the Persian Gulf and pursues the "war on terror" to the four corners of the earth, Chinese rulers will seek to build up their infrastructure and at the same time strengthen their military, especially their blue-water navy. Like the Russians, they face many internal problems, but, like the Russians, they have time on their side.

Widened war throughout the Persian Gulf, especially in Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Saudi royal family and Saudi society are seething with conflict. The bin Laden-al Qaeda phenomenon reflects a growing movement whose goal is to wrest Saudi oil fields away from U.S. influence. This movement has a significant popular base, aroused by declining economic conditions and inspired by the twin poisons of nationalism and religion. The U.S. cannot tolerate the loss of the Saudi oil prize. Washington needs to control all, not just some, of the Persian Gulf's most plentiful, cheapest supplies. A U.S. invasion of Iraq could lead to several scenarios in Saudi Arabia. None of them appears peaceful.

The same analysis applies to Iran. A victory in Iraq would give U.S. imperialism unprecedented leverage over Iran, which could well become the next U.S. target after the Iraqi oil fields have been conquered. The U.S. military could encircle and invade Iran. Fearing this contingency, Iran's present rulers might work out a deal with the U.S. A third possibility might see the U.S. engineering a coup that would replace the Iranian ayatollahs with a pro-U.S. puppet regime. Only one thing is beyond doubt: U.S. bosses need to impose their will on the entire treasure of Persian Gulf oil, and every action they take to do so will eventually generate opposite and hostile reactions, both within and outside the region.

No end in sight to fighting in the Middle East. The struggle between Israeli fascists and Palestinian nationalists shows no sign of abating. CFR head Leslie Gelb laments: "I can't imagine any serious common ground being established between them for the next year or two or maybe more" (op. cit.). The high probability of U.S. military adventures in the Persian Gulf far beyond Iraq can only further enflame this tinderbox.

JOIN PLP TO SMASH THE CAUSE OF WAR: CAPITALISM

Imperialism is truly the scourge of the earth. The immense damage U.S. bosses have caused in the Persian Gulf alone over the last decade will pale before the devastation they are about to commit there in the years ahead. The death toll of their Vietnam genocide—over three million—is likely to appear modest in comparison, once the Iraq war leads to a wholesale U.S. occupation of the Gulf states. And this carnage doesn't begin to calculate the eventual price the working class will pay for the armed conflicts that lie far in the future between U.S. imperialism and the Chinese, Russian, and European bosses vying to unseat it.

Although war in Iraq appears imminent, the conditions for the next world war may take many years to mature. U.S. imperialism's superiority and maneuverability still far outstrip the competition. But these advantages are relative. The absolute trend leans toward a narrowing of the gap and therefore toward heightened rivalry and armed struggle. War remains the normal state of affairs under the profit system. Neither prayer nor peace movements can alter this law.

The collapse of the old international communist movements dealt the world's workers a severe blow. The magnitude of this defeat is only now becoming clear. But event the severest defeat isn't the end of class struggle. We can learn from past errors and eventually turn present adversity into its opposite. The historic task confronting our class remains the revolutionary seizure of political power and the establishment of communism under a workers' dictatorship. Nothing less will meet our needs. Nothing else can smash the vicious cycle of imperialist war and bosses' terror.

War creates incomparable opportunities for the communist movement to grow. As the rulers' atrocities mount, millions of workers and others look for explanations and solutions. Only the Progressive Labor Party can provide them. Only communism is worth living, fighting, and dying for.

When the next oil war begins in Iraq, when it spreads throughout the Persian Gulf, when the rulers' police state tightens its vise, and when war ultimately pits the main imperialists against each other, we must build the PLP and fight for communism. These are the most important tasks in the world. Our Party and its ideas represent humanity's hope for the future. However long the struggle takes, the working class and communism will triumph. The specter of communism will continue haunt the bosses, until millions of armed workers bring it to life and destroy them. Join us!✪